United Nations S/2005/414

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 June 2005
English
Original: French

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic

I. Introduction

1. This report is submitted in compliance with the request of the Security Council contained in the Presidential Statement dated 26 September 2001 (S/PRST/2001/25), whereby the Council requested me to continue to keep it regularly informed about the situation in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). This report covers the period from 1 January to 30 June 2005.

II. Political situation

2. The main event was the electoral process, which ended with the holding of the first and second rounds of presidential and legislative elections on 13 March and 8 May 2005 respectively. The Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission received multifaceted support from such external partners as Germany, China, the United States of America, France, Italy, the European Union, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) and the CAEMC multinational force, as well as the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF). The Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission also received domestic support from the High Council for Communication and the Group of Elders set up after the intra-Central African talks in Libreville in January 2005 to monitor and guarantee respect for the code of good conduct governing political activity in the Central African Republic. The United Nations system also provided significant support to the electoral process through the constant facilitation role played by BONUCA and through significant technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

3. The elections took place in an atmosphere of calm apart from some organizational problems and cases of attempted or actual electoral fraud. Two of the 11 candidates in the first round of the presidential elections, General François Bozizé and Martin Ziguélé, the former Prime Minister, advanced to the second round. In addition, of the 909 candidates (including 135 women) running in the

05-39449 (E) 290605 300605

legislative elections, 18 were elected in the first round and 325 advanced to the second round.

4. On 24 May 2005, despite allegations of large-scale rigging made by the *Union des forces vives de la nation*, made up of the *Mouvement de libération du peuple centrafricain*, the *Alliance pour la démocratie et le progrès*, the *Front patriotique populaire*, Londô, and supporters of Jean-Jacques Demafouth, the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission felt that the allegations did not undermine the credibility of the electoral process and went on to announce the final results, declaring elected, in addition to 86 members of parliament, General François Bozizé as President of the Republic with 64.60 per cent of the vote compared to 35.40 per cent for Martin Ziguélé. After considering the requests for annulment submitted to it, the Transitional Constitutional Court confirmed the presidential election results and proceeded with the investiture of General Bozizé as President of the Republic and Head of State on 11 June 2005.

5. The election was observed by a contingent of 297 observers made up of 269 national and 28 international observers working under the technical coordination of OIF. In their joint report, the observers indicated that the shortcomings reported in the presidential and legislative elections were not such as to constitute irregularities. They concluded, therefore, that the electoral process had been free, reliable, fair and transparent.

6. On Friday, 3 June 2005, the new National Assembly, made up of 105 members including 12 women, met to elect its officers and standing committees and to adopt its rules of procedure. There are 11 officers, including three women, headed by Mr. Célestin Leroy Gaoumbalet, the Prime Minister of the last transitional Government, assisted by three vice-presidents including one woman. The new National Assembly is largely dominated by the *Convergence Kwa Na Kwa* party, which supports the Head of State and has rallied the *Parti de l'Unité Nationale*, the *Forum Démocratique pour la Modernité* and part of the *Jeunesse du Rassemblement Démocratique centrafricain* created by former President André Kolingba. They account for 77 of the 105 new Assembly seats. On 11 June, the Head of State appointed Mr. Elie Doté, an agro-economist who headed the Agriculture and Development Division of the African Development Bank (ADB), to the post of Prime Minister.

III. Military and security situation

7. During the period under review, the security situation was a matter of concern, particularly in Bangui and in the northern areas of the country. Some parts of the country experienced renewed attacks by armed gangs operating in the typical fashion of the Roadblockers. Most of the attacks are economic crimes targeting livestock breeders (for their cattle), commercial transport operators or diamond collectors. They set ambushes and, when attacking villages, isolated hamlets or road convoys, even kidnap the children of livestock breeders or dignitaries and demand large ransoms. These attacks have displaced about 800 people to such major Central African townships as Bouar and to nearby countries such as Cameroon and Chad, which have each received more than 5,000 refugees recently.

8. The Central African authorities are extremely concerned that these armed gangs may be used for the political destabilization of the new regime and its defence

and security forces, which seem to lack the staff and resources to deal with such a risk. The situation is impacting neighbouring countries and the rebound is spreading insecurity along common borders, leading in particular to significant population movements and the presence of armed gangs along the border with Chad and, lastly, to the circulation and proliferation of weapons between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

9. In spite of these threats, the restructuring of the armed forces has continued. France has provided support for the training of three battalions. The BONUCA military team was requested to assist the training centre set up for this purpose, to draft and circulate training modules for officers in peacekeeping operations and international humanitarian law operations. The military team is working with UNDP to implement the project for the reintegration of former combatants and for support to communities, alongside the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission.

10. The military team also participated in the meetings of the National Interministerial Committee set up to report on insecurity in the hinterland. It has carried out many security assignments and missions within the context of electoral monitoring, participated in the work of the National Committee on Good Governance, helped in the drafting of the military justice code and followed the work of the regular session of the Permanent Military Tribunal.

11. The Civilian Police Section of BONUCA continued to monitor the security situation in the capital and in the hinterland. It organized two training sessions as well as two seminars for the national police and gendarmerie. These training courses and seminars focused on the role and responsibilities of the security agencies during the electoral exercise as well as on the maintenance of law and order. A total of 110 policemen and 286 gendarmes were trained.

12. As regards regional cooperation, BONUCA is participating actively in the various stages of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. In this context, it supports the Central African Republic which, because of its geopolitical and geostrategic position, was admitted in October 2004 as a full-fledged member of the Conference. The current activities should lead, by the end of this year, to the adoption by the member States of the Conference of a series of action programmes and protocols as well as a Great Lakes Stability, Security and Development Pact.

IV. Economic and social situation

13. The year 2005 may be considered as a turning point in the growth of economic activities in the Central African Republic, which over the last 10 years has unfortunately experienced a steady and significant destruction of its production system so that the average income of citizens declined by 32 per cent over the past two decades. Starting this year, growth is expected to resume in most economic sectors, mainly because of the hopes kindled, firstly, by the recent return to constitutional order and, secondly, by the expected resumption of cooperation between the country and its major donor partners.

14. At the same time, economic activity has remained fragile on the whole. In spite of the gradual improvement in the security situation, the upswing of

agricultural production, the resumption of transport activities and the revival of mining and forestry, economic operators adopted a wait-and-see attitude during the electoral process. The resumption of economic activity expected by the third quarter of 2005 will be neither automatic nor speedy, unless the Government steps up implementation of a group of reforms advocated by the Bretton Woods institutions in 2004 and needed in order to attain the 2.6 per cent economic growth forecast for this year.

15. National public finances are still in a deep crisis, suffering from the lack of good governance, the narrowness of the tax base and the paucity of revenue. By late May 2005, only 25 billion CFA francs in budget revenue had been mobilized, representing 41 per cent of the total forecast of 61 billion CFA francs for the full year. To meet unavoidable expenses, the Government continued to borrow from the banking sector, making the commercial banks' situation precarious.

16. Over the same period, public spending was estimated at 24 billion CFA francs, of which 9.9 billion were used to pay three months' salary due for 2004. By late May 2005, accumulated external arrears amounted to 184 billion CFA francs or 25 per cent of GDP, while the higher level of domestic debt was estimated at 200 billion CFA francs of which salary arrears accounted for 70 billion CFA francs. The State was thus unable to pay its civil servants on time. The liquidity situation was aggravated by the high level of compensation and by unconventional practices of deduction at source.

17. Today the country depends increasingly on budget support from its bilateral and multilateral partners such as France, the European Union, China and CAEMC, to meet its basic needs, which rose from 20 billion CFA francs in 2003 to 46 billion CFA francs in 2004. Given the current pattern of revenue collection, it is clear that the country will not be able to meet its various payment obligations for 2005 without immediate additional budget support, failing which the social situation will be further jeopardized and the results of the electoral process called into question.

18. During the first half of 2005, implementation of the World Bank's Low-Income Countries under Stress (LICUS) Initiative made considerable progress after the delays experienced at the beginning of the Initiative. The activities conducted in this connection involve the provision of social services with an immediate impact on the public, reform of public finances, promotion of good governance and follow-up of the recommendations of the World Bank's high-level leadership seminar. Nevertheless, the lack of appropriate technical skills within the administration continues to pose a major problem for the smooth execution and complete implementation of the Initiative.

V. Humanitarian situation

19. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, transforming a situation of extreme poverty into a humanitarian emergency, especially in the four prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Grébizi and Kémo. Located in the north of the country on the borders with Chad and Cameroon, these areas were the most affected by the recent crises. In these areas, the resumption of normal activities is also impeded by insecurity, which not only keeps people from going about their normal activities but also makes it difficult for humanitarian workers to reach the vulnerable people.

20. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Central African Republic covers the period 2004-2006 and focuses essentially on democratic governance, post-conflict reconstruction and recovery and HIV/AIDS. It remains the general framework for United Nations policy in support of operational activities for development in the Republic, in which the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) and Contingency Planning constitute the main humanitarian response instruments.

21. In close cooperation with international non-governmental organizations and with additional funding from Sweden, Norway and the World Bank LICUS initiative, the country team is pursuing its activities to improve access to social services, as a matter of urgency, and to enhance social protection of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Other initiatives have also been launched to improve access to health services, boost school enrolment and revitalize agricultural production in the five prefectures most affected in the northern part of the country, particularly the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Grébizi and Kémo, where more than 25 per cent of the population live.

22. In addition, the United Nations system has stepped up its activities to combat HIV/AIDS and associated diseases, with significant financial support from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The capacity of the system agencies to intervene in these and other sectors of vital social importance continued, however, to be hampered by persistent insecurity in the zones concerned, particularly in the border regions and prefectures in the western, northern and eastern regions of the country as well as by a significant decline in funding levels, to the extent that the CAP, requiring an amount of $23 million to deal with the situation facing 1.1 million Central Africans, has so far secured only 6 per cent of the necessary funding.

23. With regard to maternal and child health, three polio vaccination campaigns have been conducted by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) throughout the country. Two other campaigns are scheduled to begin in the third quarter of the year. Generally speaking, the country's institutional capacities have been strengthened in the areas of protection and care and support for orphans and other children living with HIV/AIDS through capacity-building for State structures and non-governmental organizations working in the sector. UNICEF has evaluated a pilot project for the comprehensive development of young children. Plans are being made to scale up the project and transform it into a joint United Nations/European Union project in the Central African Republic.

24. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has also continued its assistance to farmers with the distribution of seedlings in the areas most affected by the recent political and military turmoil, especially in the prefectures of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, Nana-Grébizi and Kémo. This assistance was strengthened by the funding received from Sweden for the distribution of seeds and agricultural implements to facilitate the resumption of agricultural production activities. Given the scope of the food deficit, particularly of cassava, resulting from the combined effects of the armed conflicts and insufficient rainfall, approximately 60 per cent of the population and more than 70 per cent of the children are suffering from hunger. International assistance to the agricultural sector is indispensable to prevent a lasting humanitarian crisis.

VI. Human rights situation

25. Serious human rights violations occurred during the first half of 2005, both in Bangui and in the hinterland, undermining people's right to life, freedom of movement and personal safety. Cases of torture and of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, rape, kidnapping and forced disappearances followed by ransom demands and some summary executions were also reported. Similarly, during the electoral campaign, harassment, threats, intimidation and cases of abuse of authority by law enforcement agencies were also noted.

26. The BONUCA Human Rights Section, supported and partnered inside the country by its regional branches in Bouar and Bossangoa, focused on gender. Accordingly, it took an active part, along with the competent national authorities, in organizing workshops and activities to empower women candidates in the legislative elections and canvassing women to vote for them. A national plan is being studied with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with a view to assisting the authorities to articulate a national human rights promotion, defence and protection policy.

27. The BONUCA Information Unit has provided constant support to CEMI in its work of sensitizing, training and educating voters. It helped to produce a series of public broadcasts and teaching tools on the use of the single ballot, voter mobilization, appeals for calm during voting, and respect for the election results and for the commitments variously made. It provided appreciable support to the High Council for Communication and to the country's public and private media practitioners in their efforts and contributions to the electoral process.

VII. General comments

28. The international community was pleased that the elections of 13 March and 8 May 2005 went smoothly on the whole. It praised the mobilization and determination of the Central African electorate on the occasion of this voting. I take this opportunity to offer my sincere congratulations to all the international partners, and particularly France, Germany, the United States of America, China, Italy, BONUCA, UNDP, OIF and the Economic Community of Central African States, which gave financial and/or technical support to the Mixed and Independent Electoral Commission. I should also like to express my gratitude to the CAEMC multinational force for the decisive role that it played in ensuring the safety of the electoral process, supporting the Central African defence and security forces. However, the new authorities, the Electoral Commission and all the partners must learn the necessary lessons, so that local elections in the coming years can be better organized.

29. Now that the emergency situation has ended, the electoral process has been completed and the new institutions are in place, the Central African Republic has the tools needed to embark resolutely on the path of peace, reconstruction and sustainable development. I encourage the new authorities to do everything possible to ensure respect for human rights. It is important for the restoration of trust and reconciliation among the Central Africans that the violators should be brought to justice.

30. After so many years of suffering, instability and destruction of all kinds, however, the new authorities will not be able to deal effectively with the country's precarious social and economic situation unless they receive significant support from the partners, on the understanding that during their five-year term of office they will have to concentrate their efforts on reconstruction activities in all areas of national life. The support of the international community for the action of the Central African authorities is essential for the consolidation of the democratic achievements of recent weeks. I appeal to the good will and generosity of the partners of the Central African Republic, which should provide considerable and immediate financial support to the economic reconstruction effort now under way. Such assistance is particularly necessary because the Central African Republic remains one of the most critical parts of a subregion where peace is still fragile and volatile.

31. The partners' targeted support could focus on strengthening ways of preventing and managing high-risk security situations in the Central African Republic and in the subregion, for instance by extending the mandate of the CAEMC multinational force, increasing support for the restructuring of the Central African armed forces and effectively implementing the multinational demobilization and reinsertion programme and the project for reinsertion of ex-combatants and support to the communities. Similarly, impetus should be given to the contacts established at the highest political level in the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Chad, on possible responses to the direct security threat to the Central African Republic and certain countries of the subregion posed by the armed gangs and other Roadblockers.

32. The United Nations will provide technical and financial support to the transition authorities for the formulation of a poverty reduction strategy. The new Government will have to study it and adopt it as a national policy framework for the post-transition phase of the Republic's social and economic recovery process and as a basis for dialogue with the external development partners. In the spirit of the Millennium Development Goals, this strategy will also constitute the general framework for programming the system's integrated activities in the Central African Republic, bearing in mind the country's evolving development priorities and its efforts to mobilize the necessary resources.

33. I should like to pay a heartfelt tribute to my Representative, General Lamine Cissé, and to the staff of BONUCA and of the entire United Nations system for their dedicated performance of their functions during this particularly important and difficult period.